

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut
Before the Appropriations Committee
Department of Housing budget
February 11, 2014**

IN SUPPORT OF

**H.B. No. 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.**

Good afternoon, Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups across the state, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals living with mental health challenges and parents and family members of individuals living with such challenges. I write to you today in support of the housing items in HB 5030.

We applaud the governor for continuing his staunch support of housing solutions for Connecticut's residents including his new housing initiatives for fiscal year 2015. We particularly commend him for building on the investments of solutions for people living with mental health challenges. The proposed 110 new units of scattered-site Supportive Housing that includes an annualized \$2.2 million dedicated to rental assistance program (RAP) certificates and supportive services, is crucial for people's re-integration into the community.

Supportive Housing is a proven, effective means of giving families and individuals with mental health challenges, and/or other chronic health challenges the opportunity to live in the community by addressing their basic needs for adequate and affordable housing and giving them the option of ongoing supports and services. Supportive Housing is also a solution to homelessness as it addresses its root causes. It is a cost-effective and person-centered alternative to higher-end, more expensive and less effective institutional settings. Supportive Housing promotes self-sufficiency by offering services such as mental health care, education, job training and creation, and training in basic life skills. This integrated housing model prevents discrimination since Supportive Housing often combines apartments for people with health challenges with other market-rate or affordable apartments. Because apartments or houses look like the buildings around them, tenants do not experience the discrimination often associated with residences that exclusively serve people with specialized needs.

We strongly support the housing investments contained in this budget and encourage you to lend them your support on behalf of Connecticut's residents.

Thank you and please let us know if we can answer any questions for you.
Genuinely, Daniela Giordano